Uneconomical operation of FM Channels

1588. SHRI K.B. KRISHNAMURTHY: Will the Minister of INFORMATION AND BROADCASTING be pleased to state:

(a) whether due to uneconomical operation of FM Channels, many licencees have surrendered their licences in Mumbai area;

(b) whether any task force has been set up by Government to study the possibility of lowering the licence fee as demanded by the private operators;

(c) whether revenue sharing has been suggested as an alternate system; and

(d) if so, whether Government and the operators have arrived at any agreement to this effect?

THE MINISTER OF STATE OF THE MINISTRY OF INFORMATION AND BROADCASTING (SHRI RAVI SHANKAR PRASAD): (a) Five Companies had signed the Licence Agreement and deposited Bank Guarantees for private FM stations at Mumbai. All the licencees of Mumbai have operationalised their stations.

(b) to (d) A Committee have been constituted *vide* order dated 24-07.2003 to make recommendations for Radio Broadcasting for Phase-II as also to study the desirability and legal implications of making modifications in the regime of Phase-I licencees should a different regime be proposed for Phase-II.

Publication of Daily Newspapers

1589. SHRI M.V. RAJASEKHARAN: Will the Minister of INFORMATION AND BROADCASTING be pleased to state:

(a) the number of Newspapers (Dailies) published in the country and the number of readers of these Dailies;

(b) whether it is a fact that these Dailies are by and large Urban oriented;

(c) if so, the percentage of coverage given by these Dailies for the Rural News items;